

<b>CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT</b>		
<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Period of Report</b>
Ian Maher	Cabinet Member Regeneration & Tourism	December 2012

## **1. Housing Market Renewal – General**

### *Klondyke*

Remediation has been completed on the Phase 1 site and construction will commence immediately of 86 new housing units, 17 of which will be for affordable rent.

There are currently only 8 occupied properties in Phases 2 & 3. Intensive work is underway to try to encourage these residents to move temporarily, however, most have indicated that they are not interested in doing so. Despite this officers are continuing to engage with the remaining residents to discuss their options.

CCTV has now been installed on the estate, and is able to be accessed by both the Police and Sefton Security.

Bellway is currently preparing a new layout proposal for Phases 2 and 3 with a view to seeking Planning Consent in the early part of the new year.

A judicial review on the need for an environmental impact assessment on the demolition of the Springwell Chapel was heard in the High Court for the 27<sup>th</sup> November following action taken by Save Britain's Heritage. We await the outcome verdict.

### *Bedford/Queens*

Phase 1B is now complete and Phase 2 is onsite. Demolition is completed on Phase 3. Discussions with BIS about the use of Regional Growth Funding to fund the development of Bedford Queens Phase 3, St Winefrides and the refurbishment of the Kings Centre are nearing conclusion with a confirmed funding offer expected soon.

## **2. Housing Market Renewal Transition Fund**

Following a High Court hearing on the 18<sup>th</sup> September, Save Britain's Heritage won the right to a judicial review hearing into the allocation of Transition Funding. The Judicial Review was due to be heard in January 2013. However, the Secretary of State has conceded that the funding decision was unlawful, and a settlement will be made out of court. However, this should NOT lead to any action to try to reclaim the Transition Grant.

## **3. Housing Options Service**

The new Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings scheme, Property Pool Plus has been up and running since September. As with the old system, the new system is administered, on behalf of the Council by OVH.

The Local Authority partners will be conducting a Policy Review over the coming months, in light of early operational experience. Revisions of policy will be reported to Members of each LA for approval in due course.

We have appointed Chartered Institute of Housing Consultancy to undertake the task of Reviewing our Homeless Services and production of a new Homeless Strategy, over the coming 6 months. The Homelessness Act (2002) requires every Council to review and produce a new Homeless Strategy every 5 years.

Members have agreed to the Lease disposal of Windsor House, Southport, former Homeless hostel, to Forum HA, who will utilise the building to provide low level supported accommodation for young single people

#### **4. Private Sector Housing Standards Service**

The (2009) Private Sector Housing Strategy includes an objective to set up a (voluntary) Landlord Accreditation scheme in Sefton. OVH agreed to fund a study into the feasibility of setting up a scheme, and this included consultations with landlords and letting agencies and other stakeholder services, which revealed a fair level of interest among landlords. A key issue was to consider ways any scheme could be funded - to meet both set up and ongoing running costs. On 31<sup>st</sup> October, Cabinet approved 'one-off' funding, to help establish a scheme and operate it, for a 12 month period. Approval was given to appoint Wirral Council to do this for us, which has recently been formalised. We would hope a scheme will be agreed and set up over the next 3 to 4 months. However, due to their own budget cuts, the Wirral officers involved have been issued with 'at risk' letters, which casts a doubt on their ability to assist us beyond April.

There is continued focus on dealing with empty homes, with staff taking enforcement actions on long term empty homes.

The latest monitoring statistics reveal there are a total of 5,124 empty Properties (4.08% of all properties) of which 2,210 have been empty for more than 6 months. This shows a continued fall in the number and proportion of empty homes in the borough over the last 3 years. [In April 2010, there were 6,454 empty homes, of which 2,790 were long term]

Plus-Dane submitted a successful funding bid to the HCA's Empty Homes Initiative, which include delivering empty properties on the basis of delivering both purchase and repair units, and leasing units mainly in the Southport Area. Plus-Dane have developed a Leasing scheme. Those owners interested in leasing are being contacted, and negotiations between the HA and a small number of owners have commenced. Cosmopolitan HA have withdrawn from this scheme.

Riverside Housing have received funding under another empty homes initiative; 'Clusters of Empty Homes'. They will be seeking to purchase, repair and then sell 18 properties under their Own-Place scheme in the Knowsley Rd & Peel Rd area of Bootle.

#### **5. Home Improvements Team and DFGs**

The council have approved a capital budget of circa £2.5m for 12-13. In addition the Govt recently announced an additional sum of £377,000 for DFGs this year.

Part of the service is provided via an agency agreement with Mears Ltd (who took over Anchor Trust in 2010). Due to the costs involved the Council has agreed that it would be more cost effective to bring the services in-house. Notice has been served on Mears and work is progressing to bring the service in-house before the end of this financial year. The Council's Minor Adaptations service will also be managed within this service area.

**6. Housing Strategy**

A new Tenancy Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 13 December.

We are about to appoint David Adamson consultants to undertake a borough wide Private sector housing stock condition survey. This will involve the survey of circa 1200 randomly selected properties across the borough. The work has been procured jointly with Wirral council, to generate some efficiencies for both Authorities.

**Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan.** The Sub-Regional Local Investment Plan has been signed by the 6 Local Authorities involved. This will help guide and prioritise any future HCA investment in the Liverpool City Region.

**7. StepClever Property Project**

The Step Clever property programme is coming to an end with final payments being claimed. Discussions are ongoing with Liverpool CC about the details and potential for the proposed Legacy Fund, Premises Support grant.

**8. Southport Cultural Centre**

Subject to final checks it is anticipated that the substantive portion of the building will be made available to the Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012. The Council will then be in a position to carry out their fit out works to the library and other areas.

The procurement of some fit out works, including loose furniture and equipment and theatre and studio lighting, sound and curtains are ongoing and the procurement of the kitchen will commence as soon as the layout details are finalised.

The main contract works are due to be completed in February 2013 but the date for final completion of the fit out works is still to be confirmed. The end user has aspirations to open the ground floor and library to the public in March 2013 and the remaining areas in May 2013 – all efforts are being made to achieve these timescales.

Every effort is also being made to keep costs to a minimum but there are additional costs.

## **9. Southport Market**

The Capital works for the building were completed in July and the Market remains at approx 95% occupancy which exceeds expectations in the first year of operation. The Final Account is close to being agreed. Works are progressing on the design and implementation of the gateway signs and other directional signage to highlight the presence of the Market.